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ABSTRACT

The meeting reported upon was held to review existing cooperation between the United Nations Specialized Agencies in the field of literacy, as well as to discuss future collaboration in the light of the 1971-1972 Program and Budget of UNESCO and the orientation and expansion of the World Literacy Programme proposed therein. The report covers the meeting agenda as follows: (1) General Review of Activities in 1970; (2) Inter-Agency Cooperation in the Future Programme; (3) Regional Centre for Functional Literacy in Rural Areas for the Arab States (ASFEC) and the Regional Centre for Functional Literacy in the Rural Areas of Latin America (CREFAL); and (4) Research and Diffusion of Information. A list of participants is given as Annex I. (Author/DB)

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
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INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON WORK-ORIENTED LITERACY

Unesco House, 1-2 December 1970

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

As in previous years, the meeting was convened and organized by Unesco; its aim was to review existing co-operation between the United Nations Specialized Agencies in the field of literacy, as well as to discuss future collaboration in the light of the 1971-1972 Programme and Budget of Unesco and the orientation and expansion of the World Literacy Programme proposed therein. A list of participants is attached as Annex I.

The agenda was as follows:

1. General review of activities since the Special Meeting convened by the Director-General from 1 to 5 December 1969.
2. Inter-agency co-operation in future projects.
3. Regional Centre for Functional Literacy in Rural Areas for the Arab States (ASFEC) and the Regional Centre for Functional Literacy in the Rural Areas of Latin America (CREFAL).
4. Research in the field of functional literacy, and documentation and information.

I. GENERAL REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES IN 1970

The meeting began with a presentation by Unesco of the situation in the Experimental Literacy Programme as a whole, as compared with December 1969. It was stated that there had been very significant improvement in the programme in the last year, and especially with regard to:

quantative results: some 160,000 adults are at present following classes compared with 25,000 in November 1969;

methodology: nearly 50 differentiated programmes exist;

evaluation: 11 basic indicators for evaluation, which will form the basis for international comparability, have been developed;

increased and continuous in-service training within many projects;

operational workshops and siminars at regional and national levels

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several publications;

wider diffusion of information concerning the programme.

In addition, it was emphasized that each of the projects in the Experimental Programme had been visited during the year and the consequent revisions and modifications in the Plans of Operation were taking place. Effective solutions were being found to many of the problems and difficulties previously encountered in methdology and evaluation.

A brief summary by project of the present situation was then given, with particular reference to matters concerning other United Nations agencies:

Ecuador: The problems in this project were explained, as well as the proposed changes following the inter-agency mission to the country. The confirmation of the government's full participation in the project is awaited. It was confirmed that the FAO and ILO experts were not being extended.

Ethiopia: The government is likely to request that the duration of the agricultural extension post in Jimma be extended to 36 man/months, by taking 12 m/m from the Home Economics post. FAO confirmed its agreement to his, if a request is so made by the government. It is also likely that the government will request the extension of the industrial vocational training ILO post (Mr. Blomberg) for a further 12 months, since the expert has been working without a counterpart and his work has been held up in consequence. The official request is awaited.

The problem of WHO participation in the project was evoked, since WHO is mentioned specifically in the Plan of Operations and also in view of the fact that qualified health education officers are available in Ethiopia. The lack of inter-ministerial co-operation was given as the reason for the non-participation of the Ministry of Health until now, but the regional WHO office in Alexandria will take up contact with this Ministry in order to engage the close co-operation of public health institutions in the project.

Iran: It was confirmed that the ILO post of expert in vocational training in the textile industries (Mr. Lamto) had been extended. The immediate needs of the project were particularly in the textile industry, and the expert is also working competently in industrial organization in general. A consultant in audio-visual aids is also to be sent to the project. It was thought that the next inter-agency evaluation mission would take place at the end of the project - in 1972 if the project is extended for one year.

Mali: The agricultural part of the project is extended to cover the "groundnut" sector, and a small project for women is also proposed. The industrial sector has, however, had difficulties and has rather been sacrificed to the agricultural sub-projects. The original target of 10,000 adults, working in State industry, is likely to be reduced to 1,000 in key industries. The industrial training post which has been vacant for a long time is now to be filled by Mr. Engelen (ILO), who has particular experience in work analysis: he will spend some time in Unesco, Paris, for his briefing. The possibility of collaborating with the existing ILO projects in Mali was raised, and particularly with MLI 11 (Assistance to State-owned Enterprises).

Tanzania: An inter-agency mission to this project is foreseen for January/February 1971, with a view to the revision of the Plan of Operations which will probably be extended for one year. It will also be proposed that the 36 m/m allocated in the Planop to the rural construction post, which the government feels is no longer necessary, be used for other posts (24 m/m adult education specialist, 12 m/m graphic and layout). Prior to this inter-agency evaluation meeting, ILO will forward documentation to Unesco on the World Employment Programme so that particular reference to this may be made with regard to its implications on the Tanzanian project.

Mr. Harris, FAO expert in agricultural rural training, has taken up his functions; the duration of his post is 24 months.

Sudan: Following a Unesco mission to the project it was proposed that the expert in home economics was no longer necessary since national specialists could provide the needed expertise, and that a methodology/training expert would replace this post. There has been slow progress in the vocational training aspect - an extra 8 m/m in all (four consultants) would be needed. Job descriptions have been received and will be discussed with ILO. An ILO mission is to visit the Sudan and should bear in mind these consultant needs, the details of which are being given to ILO. In addition, there should be closer co-operation with the industrial vocational training scheme, the national vocational training scheme and the ILO Productivity Centre.

WHO has not been involved in the planning or implementation of the project, although at a local level contacts do exist between the CTA and local WHO representatives. A health adviser may be requested, and the WHO Regional Office in Alexandria may be able to finance this. At the interministerial level, the Ministry of Health will be represented on the National Advisory Committee which has recently been created.

In April/May 1971 an inter-agency mission should visit the project (UNDP/Unesco/ILO/FAO and probably WHO) to study the feasibility and needs of the second phase.

India: A summary of the activities of the project was given. Evaluation is perhaps the aspect most lagging behind at the moment. FAO felt that efforts should be made by the whole international team to increase even more the momentum already achieved in India. In addition, an effective relationship should be worked out for the implementation of activities at State level, and suitable structures should be created for necessary support. ILO suggested that the possibility should be examined of an eventual involvement of its National Apprenticeship Scheme (IND 87) with the Farmers' Training and Functional Literacy Project.

Syria: The project was given a brief review and some of the problems evoked. In similar joint-agency projects, briefings of all experts should be ensured at Headquarters of both agencies to reinforce effective co-operation between the technical and the functional literacy experts.

Algeria: The government's decision as to the future of the project is awaited, and the ILO co-operation in the project should be reviewed according to this decision.

Guinea: The national authorities have now given positive indications of their interest and commitment. Mr. Bellahsène, Unesco Headquarters methodology specialist, is to go to the project as CTA and it is hoped that it will thus be able to get off to a new start.

Madagascar: In spite of certain difficulties, the project looks hopeful for the future. ILO will envisage Unesco co-operation, with possibly a Unesco expert, in the second (pre-professional) phase of the National Vocational Training Programme (MAG 22) and will contact Unesco Headquarters in this connexion.

The background of certain other projects where functional literacy activities have begun, or are about to begin, was given:

People's Republic of the Congo: A literacy TA expert will assist the UNDP/ILO rural employment project.

Guatemala: A functional literacy component is to be introduced into an agricultural development scheme. Early in 1971 Unesco will send a consultant to establish the work plan.

Kenya: Two Unesco literacy experts will be attached to a FAO/SIDA project.

Afghanistan: Three Unesco experts will assure the functional literacy activities in an FAO/SIDA project. WHO participation in this project, already existing at local level, should also be established at Headquarters level.

Nepal: The report of the Unesco consultant at present in the country is awaited. Contact should be made with FAO for a link between the functional literacy activities and the increased use of high-yielding crop varieties and fertilizers project there (NEP 12). WHO also have an operational project in Nepal (NEP 8) and if its second phase is one of health education, Unesco may well be able to assist.

Zambia: Preparatory work is underway in this project, financed by the Nordic Students' Associations (Norway and Denmark) which will be directed to agriculture and health.

Niger: The Swiss foundation FOPOTEC is financing this functional literacy project which will be launched in 1971. Possible co-operation with the FAO pilot agricultural development project (NER 16) may be envisaged.

Gabon/Senegal/Mauritania: A recent mission visited these countries with a view to commencing functional literacy activities, financed by the Commission of European Communities (Common Market). In Gabon the project would concern the mining, transport and petrol industries and the railway. In Senegal agricultural co-operatives (and the ILO rural training project (SEN 11) may be involved) and in Mauritania rice production.

Mekong: The interest in functional literacy of the countries bordering the Mekong delta (Laos, Cambodia, Viet-Nam and Thailand) has been ascertained and a planning mission with the participation of Unesco, FAO, ILO and perhaps WHO and Unicef should visit the area. IBRD also indicated interest in such a large-scale scheme, and suggested that its local representative be contacted and involved in the mission.

Iraq: A Unesco mission is at present in the country to study the possibilities for a small-scale functional literacy project there.

II. INTER-AGENCY CO-OPERATION IN THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

Mr. A. Deleon, Director of EDA stated that co-operation between the United Nations Specialized Agencies in the field of functional literacy has, to date, had three distinct phases.

1. The first stage was one of establishing the intellectual link between agencies and arriving at a full understanding of the concept of functional literacy. This was, in reality, a two-year process, but was, however, an enriching experience in itself and, in turn, enabled a clarification and assertion of the concept to emerge, with four practical results:

(a) the setting up of necessary infrastructure for interdisciplinary action. In this way, the monopoly for such activities, hitherto held by educational institutions, whether governmental or voluntary, was broken down and the responsibility and involvement of other departments and ministries enlisted.

(b) The establishment of horizontal structures, so necessary for multi-disciplinary development programmes, in addition to the traditional vertical structuration.

(c) The evaluation of activities, not merely in an educational, pedagogical or simply quantitative way, but in socio-economic terms, to ascertain the programme's impact on development itself.

(d) The realization that the implementation of functional literacy activities and particularly inter-agency co-operation and full integration in such a new and complex field, could not be achieved overnight and needed time to take root.

2. Two tasks were outstanding for the second phase:

the elaboration of adapted methods of functional literacy for the professional and literacy training of manpower. This task was undoubtedly the joint responsibility of the United Nations agencies, by its interdisciplinary nature and, as such, has not been successfully accomplished. The experts in the different specialities were in position, but they were not provided the necessary backstopping from their respective headquarters and, especially in this important question of methodology, they were not able to provide the necessary cross-fertilization.

The second task was the essential one of inserting functional literacy into development projects. With certain exceptions, such as the agricultural projects in India, Syria and Afghanistan, in which functional literacy has been included, this task has not been fulfilled. There has not been due study of development projects at their inception to see how far illiteracy actually was a development bottleneck, and, thus, how far a functional literacy component could help realize a project's objectives.

3. The tasks outstanding for the future then in this joint programme are several:

(a) functional literacy activities should be closely linked with the objectives of the Second Development Decade. These development objectives should be carefully studied and a strategy developed for their achievement.

(b) Functional literacy and manpower training should be integrated into both the ILO World Employment Programme and the activities planned by the FAO for the Green Revolution. Unesco is interested in studying the possibilities for the liaison of functional literacy to these fields.

(c) It is essential that new financial resources (regional and national banks as well as enterprise itself and other bodies) be found and tapped. Investment organisms have tended to neglect the inclusion of the human element in their plans: manpower planning and human resources should now be foreseen in addition to capital investment. In particular, the interest of IBRD in the specific field of functional literacy, outlined by Mr. MacNamara in two recent speeches has yet to be confirmed in a concrete form.

(d) There is a growing need for small-scale functional literacy projects, which, by their number, can well play a "multiplier" rôle.

(e) The end result of this third phase of inter-agency co-operation in this field should be the proof that functional literacy is a necessary element in the development process, and why. It is evident that if the secretariats of the different United Nations agencies responsible for this joint programme continue to be involved in only a nominal manner, as has been the case, this proof will not be forthcoming. It is thus essential that there now be a real commitment by all concerned.

(f) In the same way that Unesco is now investigating the possibility of applying the innovations elaborated in the experimental literacy programme to other fields of both formal and informal education, the United Nations sister agencies should also consider how far these new methods could not be applied to other fields - vocational training, agricultural extension, community development, co-operative societies, health education, public works, road and railways constructions etc.

The different agencies made the following comments on the above points:

IBRD: There is a steady tendency to liberalization in the bank's approach to education, and it is now increasingly ready to experiment. It is interested above all in training within large-scale development projects, and would certainly consider a functional literacy component in such projects as a large FAO irrigation programme, within the framework of the "Green Revolution", or an ILO road maintenance programme covering the training of a vast labour force. In this context, however, the results of cost-effectiveness studies on functional literacy could furnish the bank with the proof needed for such an investment to be made. This evidence may also engage the interest of private enterprise.

ILO: ILO analysed the reasons for the shortcomings in inter-agency co-operation in the field of functional literacy: insufficient information between agencies of both the general and technical evolution of the projects, no solely responsible ILO officer; lack of involvement of other agencies at the planning stages. ILO felt that the present structure of functional literacy projects, i.e. the inclusion of one or two sub-contracted posts within a large-scale literacy programme, was better than the contrary (the inclusion of a functional literacy expert in a development project) since this latter possibility may not allow for efficient use of the literacy expert's services working in a project without literacy structures. In this connexion, Unesco replied that in fact the right

proportion of the functional literacy element in relation to the totality of a project must of course be carefully worked out.

FAO: FAO stressed the need for the full involvement of the joint participating agency at the planning stage, and also emphasized the need for scientific evidence of the costs and real benefits of functional literacy. In this context, a comparative study of training programmes with and without a functional literacy component may be revealing.

WHO: WHO informed the meeting of its intention to continue the active interest it had hitherto shown in the programme.

III. ASFEC AND CREFAL

The activities of the two centres were reviewed briefly and the new orientation given by operational training seminars was stressed.

The closest participation of the United Nations, FAO, ILO and WHO in these centres is more than ever necessary on a full-time basis. It was stated that FAO, ILO and WHO were most interested in continuing their co-operation in ASFEC and CREFAL, although they could not at the present time allocate funds for full-time experts. They will write to Unesco to this effect before 15 January.

IV. RESEARCH AND DIFFUSION OF INFORMATION

Research: A brief summary of the priorities in research was given - methods, reading materials, socio-psychological studies, linguistics. ILO informed that its research unit would contact Unesco with a view to future co-operation in the field of research. FAO suggested that more experimentation and evaluation be carried out within the framework of joint projects, such as India, which represented a good research laboratory.

Diffusion of information: ILO felt that much was lacking in this field and hoped that in the future much more general and technical information would be sent to them. FAO suggested, for their part, that documents of a technical nature also be sent to the FAO regional offices, where their relevance could best be appreciated, with a specific request for comments. The FAO headquarters should be kept closely informed with general documentation and final reports, evaluation mission reports, etc. WHO also suggested that technical documentation be sent to its regional offices. In turn, all agencies agreed to furnish information and documentation of their activities relative to Unesco's literacy programme.

ANNEX I/ANNEXE I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS/LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

ILO/OIT	Mr. P. Voisin	
FAO	Mr. J. di Franco	
WHO/OMS	M.A. Moraefi	
IBRD/BIRD	Mr. F. Steuber	
UNESCO	Mr. A. Deleon	EDA
	Mr. J.C. Cairns	"
	Mr. G. Mouton	" (who acted as Chairman)
	Mr. I. de Freites	"
	Mr. M. Husain	"
	Mr. W. Zyss	"
	Mr. M. de Clerck	"
	Mr. L. Bataille	"
	Miss C. Kissling	"
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